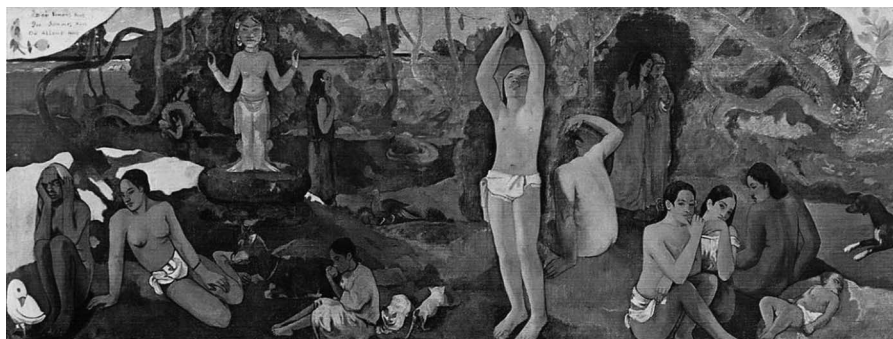


***D'Où Venons Nous/Que Sommes Nous/Où Allons Nous* (Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?)**



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I was in Boston taking a course, when, one Saturday, the schedule allowed me to visit the Museum of Fine Arts. I was impressed by the Gauguin exhibit, especially the 1897 painting with the inscription used as the title of this piece. Gauguin, the French Post-Impressionist, was living in Tahiti at the time. I wondered at the mystery of the writing in the upper left corner. We do not know if he was having an existential crisis, was contemplating his death (he died five years later), or was just being whimsically philosophical. Anyway, there are times when it seems appropriate to ask those questions. As the new editor of the *Journal of the Medical Library Association (JMLA)*, I think this is one of those times.

Where do we come from?

We come from a good place. The *JMLA* has a good platform from which to spring. Susan Starr just finished her tenure as editor. Her six years of work have been successful in leading the publication forward. She helped novice researchers and writers, encouraged mid-level writers, and subdued overly enthusiastic authors whose assertions were only weakly (or not) supported by their data. She also made changes such as placement of the table of contents of research articles on the front cover, email delivery of the table of contents ahead of print to

Medical Library Association (MLA) members, and renaming and reorganization of the *JMLA* submission categories with detailed article descriptions to encourage more submissions and better articles. All of this and more has increased our prestige and credibility. We are in your debt, Susan.

The *JMLA* also has a secret element, too. Well, if not a secret, at least hidden and behind the scenes. I only recently discovered the staff at MLA headquarters. Elizabeth Lund, director of publications, and Susan C. T. Talmage, copy editor, help keep the publication afloat and guide it through the multifarious steps of production. From all of us who benefit, thank you.

What are we?

We are the premier journal for health care librarians. Today's *JMLA* is different than those of the past, reflecting how medical librarianship roles are different. Certainly, our role is generally the same—making health-related information readily available to our health care clients—but our resources and tools are different, and in many cases, where we work is different.

Where are we going?

As with every replacement in *JMLA* editorship over the years, there comes change. I think it is time to look at the disruptive interventions in our field (see my

editorial in this issue). *Nous allons changer!* We will change! It sounds eloquent in French. It may be less than eloquent in practice.

A challenge for the *JMLA* is not only to keep up with the stream of change in the field, but to foresee change so we can prepare for it. At the same time, the *JMLA* must help us understand the implications, values, and historical relevance of events and trends. It must do all this in a way that is highly readable and, yes, entertaining.

The print journal itself presents concerns. First, it is costly, and it is not clear that the cost is fully justified. I do not know about your library, but our library has no print copies of current journals, not even the popular journals. Everything is online. So, we will look at an electronic format for the *JMLA* or maybe a mixture, with print copies for an additional fee for members. How many MLA members would pay a little beyond their MLA dues for an annual print subscription? What would a web version look like? Questions like this are emerging.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I am not sure we have captured the minds and hearts of the majority of our members. We need to make the research articles more readable, and we need to add more features of interest to all health sciences librarians. The *JMLA*—much like *BMJ*, *JAMA*, and *The Lancet*—has readers who are diverse in their interests. How do these other journals maintain interest

among their readers with diverse interests? One way is that they add interpretative editorials and "101 articles" written by experts. "101 articles" for example, can be reviews that build a foundation for understanding the research results and the implications of the results. If we concentrate on the web format for our journal, we will have the freedom to expand content, test it for its interest, and reach a wider readership as the *JMLA* offers more relevant articles to all health sciences

librarians, no matter their job title, their work, or place of work.

I will continue to encourage real science articles, because our footsteps down the future road must be evidence based. I plan to highlight research articles in the *JMLA* and invite more individuals to submit, especially in connection with the MLA president's initiatives. I want to encourage multisite research, a style that has been so effective in other disciplines.

It is an exciting time for the *JMLA*. We need you to help us. It will take time for all this to happen, but when it does, *Il sera bon!* It will be good!



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